EASTER SUNDAY AT CHRISTENDOM'S FARTHEST NORTH.

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THE WONDERFUL AURORA OF THE ARCTIC SKIES.

"But slowly the light wanes, and one by one the great northern constellations, Cassiopeia, Orion, the Great Bear, Gemini and those sparkling brilliants of the Arctic night, Arcturus, Aldebaran, Wega and the rest, come forth as for a few hours the rapidly contracting shadow of the 'Great Night' folds the Arctic world in its sable mantle, only to have it rent and slashed by the flashing blades of the Aurora, darting rapier-like athwart the blue black sky, then rushing together to form a blazing arch spanning the heavens and bristling with points, which leap and flash like the uplifted sabres of charging cavalry."

Easter Rites and Easter Fashions in the Most Northerly Town in the World.

Easter in the Arctic Regions! It seems an absurdity, in fact an impossibility. Easter, with all its religious symbolism in regions which are the synonym for all that is barren, desolate, dark and frozen; and among a people who are, according to the popular idea, simply diminutive, disagreeable animals in human form, with an unquenchable thirst for train oil and an inordinate appetite for raw blubber.

Yet there is a narrow ribbon of land (the west coast of Greenland), from five to eighty miles in width, stretching due north for hundreds of miles beyond the Arctic Circle, ribbon made up of mountains, valleys and deep branching fjords, washed on the west by the waves of the Arctic Ocean, the playground of whale and iceberg, and bounded on the east by the rigid, eternally frozen waves of the great inland ice, the "Sahara of the North;" ribbon of land on which for several centuries has shone the light of Christianity, and where the legends and symbolism of that belief have been taught.

Centuries ago there was a monastery there, and during the crusades a tribute of gleaming ivory walrus tusks was sent across the iceberg-haunted Arctic Seas, from this land, to aid the holy wars.

To-day, interrupted only by two or three Moravian missionary settlements, the Lutheran Church holds sway there, and the anniversary of the Resurrection is one of the great feast days of the year. From Cape Farewell, northward for nearly eight hundred miles to Upernavik, the most northerly civilized town in the world, there is in every tiny Greenland town a rude chapel, pointing its symbolic spire heavenward through the midnight sunlight of Summer and the noonday night of Winter. At Upernavik we will pass our Easter, and attend the services in the most northerly chapel in the world.

This Arctic outpost of civiliation, Upernavik, is situated on the southern point of a barren rock island, lying just off the Greenland coast in 72 degrees 48 minutes N. lat. Five low, one-story houses, with thick walls pierced by tiny windows, a little chapel, and a workshop and storehouse, form the village. Back of these buildings the bleak rocks rise to a height of a few hundred feet, and just to the west are the score or more of rude stone and turf huts, the homes of the Eskimo population.

Just over a spur from the rock summit of the island is a southward facing slope, where an inch or two of coarse soil, moistened for a few weeks in Summer by the melting snow above, gives precarious foothold to patches of Arctic moss and straggling blades of stunted grass. Here is the cemetery, the setting for the last scene in the life drama of the Arctic resident. But here, savage nature, hostile to man through life, even in death refuses him burial in her bosom, and the narrow caskets which enclose his remains are laid upon the surface, covered with stones and a rude wooden cross erected, on which the brief legend, "Born ——; Died ——," is inscribed. Through the interstices of these stones the Winter winds force the drifting snow, and search and penetrate each crack in the coffin, till, as the years pass by, the winds and drifting snow sweep unimpeded around the bleaching bones.

The Danish residents of the place are a Colonibestyrer, or Governor, and Assistan' Governor; a doctor and a pastor. The Eskimo population numbers between two and three hundred.

The outlook from the low, black houses covers southward the surface of the harbor, girt by its snow-covered iron rocks; eastward the narrow channel between the island and the mainland, walled by a vertical cliff, over the top of which peers the snowy head of mighty Kresarsoak (Sanderson's Hope), first sighted by Davis; westward the eye sees only the infinite stretching icy fastnesses of Baffin's Bay. From the summit of the island may be seen, far up through deep frozen fjords, great glaciers, and the mighty sweep of the inland ice.

Occasionally a whaler or an Arctic expedition ship touches here for two or three hours, before pushing northward to begin its desperate battle with the Arctic ice in the dreaded fastnesses of Melville Bay.

Upernavik is situated in a region of wild, savage grandeur, yet its charms as a permanent residence are not overpowering, even though the little low posted rooms of the dark, heavy walled houses are warm and cozy, and a ship comes once a year to bring provisions, letters and papers, and to carry away the blubber and sealskins, bearskins, ivory, elderdown and letters for home.

The Winter night at Upernavik is eighty-three days long, and the sea is frozen solidly to a depth of several feet during the greater portion of the year, while during the remainder icebergs and fields of ice are constantly drifting past, driving sometimes upon the iron shore, and going to destruction with a noise that rivals loudest thunder.

The Winter night at Upernavik ends on the 31st of January, and from that time until May 8, when the Summer day of twelve weeks begins, the days are constantly lengthening, yet at Easter time the only sign of approaching Summer is the brilliant sunlight. Everything else is of the Winter. The frozen rocks are covered with snow, except where swept bare by the biting winds; the sea is an unbroken expanse of white, without a crack or flaw in the thick fetters which the fierce cold of the dark Winter night has riveted upon it; and the thermometer is still below zero.

Preparations for the Easter festivities may be said to begin in the early Fall before the Winter snows cover everything.

The native women and children and the Danish ladies with their children are out day after day, scrambling over the rocks and mountain sides and exploring all the little valleys, in their effort to gather as much of the crofoot as they possibly can.

This evergreen creeps along the ground in marshy places, and yards of it are gathered and used every year in their Christmas and Easter decorations. After it is brought to the settlement trenches are dug and the greens put into them, then the snow is allowed to cover them, and in this way they are perfectly preserved throughout the long Arctic Winter.

During the Arctic night, which in this latitude is eighty-three days long, the Danish ladies busy themselves with all sorts of fancy work, with which they decorate their homes. But the church is not forgotten, as the masses of beautifully colored paper flowers show.

On Good Friday all flags are at half-mast and the little chapel draped in mourning, and while the Danish families attend the services, dressed in black, the Eskimos wear their most sombre attire. The kamiks, or boots, of the women, usually of the brightest colors on festive occasions, give way to dark purple ones (black is unknown), their broad bead collars are left off, and every bit of color dispensed with. The only color about the man's costume is a bright handkerchief about the neck and the anarak or hooded shirt, usually made of bright calico. These are also left off on Good Friday. All day long the settlement is perfectly quiet, every one remaining indoors except when they go to services, of which there are two —one in the morning at 10 o'clock, in the Danish language, and one in the afternoon, in the Eskimo. Most, if not all, of the natives understand Danish as well as Eskimo, but the pastor always holds services in both languages, so that every one is sure to understand.

This settlement, seen on Good Friday and then again on Easter Sunday would hardly be recognized as the same.

The whole place now is fluttering with the bright Danish flags, the natives dressed in their gayest colors, are swarming about the chapel and the Governor's house, and the air is filled with their laughter and shouts of merriment. The Danish families, especially the children, are dressed in their finest, and each one wears something new in honor of the occasion. They have all been up since the first break of day, for does not the Easter Hare bring nests full of all sorts of good things for the good children? But, unlike Santa Claus, who presents his goodies to the children, this Easter Hare hides the nests and the children must hunt them.

For weeks the Danish ladies have been preparing these Easter surprises. There must be a nest for every child in the settlement. These are made of strips of different colored tissue paper interwoven. In each is put a hare, baked of a semi-sweet dough, half a dozen different shaped cakes, and a handful of eggs made of sugar and colored.

A grand transformation scene has also taken place within the little chapel. Everywhere are garlands, wreaths and crosses, made of the beautiful green crofoot. In between the dark green nestle the paper flowers, looking for all the world like natural ones. The whole pulpit is covered with the green, and beside the pastor stands a huge bouquet of real hyacinths, rose geraniums, crocuses and tulips, grown especially for this occasion by the ladies, who vie with each other in raising the finest specimens and having them blossom for the Easter decorations.

Then all at once the sound of the little chapel bell leaps out through the clear, frosty air, and at the note the shouts and laughter cease, and all through the Eskimo section of the town stooping forms may be seen emerging from the low, dark holes which form the entrances to the stone and turf huts. As they stand erect their is revealed the brilliant, unique holiday attire of the Eskimo girls and women. What a kaleidoscope they make! It looks like a veritable rainbow moving across the snow.

The costume of these Eskimo women is of the most pronounced "new woman" type, and is really elaborate and artistic.

The full dress kamiks, or boots, are made of well-tanned sealskin dyed red, yellow, blue or green, as the wearer's taste may dictate, or perhaps of immaculate white, and up the front and round the top is a broad strip, embroidered with tiny bits of colored leather, in various designs, giving the impression of fine bead work. Each side of this embroidery is outlined with a narrow line of white sealskin, framing and accentuating the entire design. Issuing from the tops of these boots and extending for several inches above the knee is a peculiar arrangement of white muslin, frequently delicately embroidered or trimmed with lace. The first glance at these affairs has rather an antipodean effect. As in Japan they wear white, instead of black, for mourning, and the mechanic draws his plane and saw toward himself, instead of away, contrary to all our notions; so these Arctic ladies wear the most delicate item of their lingerie inverted, with the fancy work at the top.

Their glossy, velvety sealskin trousers are scarcely more than trunks, reaching from just above the hip bone to a few inches down the thigh, where they meet the tops of the already described white articles. These trousers have a decorated panel about two inchs wide, inlaid up the front of each leg. The centre of this panel throughout its length is embroidered with colored bits of leather, and each side is edged with a strip of the closely cut white fur of the young seal, thus leaving an edge of the red leather on either side of the white fur. The blouse, made of some bright plaid or check, mainly lined with eiderdown, comes down to the top of the trousers, and is bordered with a gay colored ribbon about two inches wide. Around the neck and wrists are broad bands of black fur, and below the fur, about the neck, falls the bead collar, eight or ten inches deep, made of green, yellow, blue, red and white beads. A bright handkerchief twisted about the head, or colored ribbon tied about the hair, knotted on top of the head, completes the costume.

The colors in these costumes run the entire scale of the spectrum, and when lit by the brilliant Easter sunlight, and accented by the dazzling snow background and the movements of the wearers, the general effect is extremely brilliant.

The colors of the handkerchief or ribbon about the hair alone do not depend upon the wearer's taste. These colors are fixed by custom, and indicate the wearer's social status; thus a red ribbon shows the wearer to be a maiden; blue, a wife; black, a widow; green, one who is neither maid, wife nor widow, and white, one who, though a widow, has no objections to trying the matrimonial lottery again. It is perhaps a question whether the advantages or disadvantages of this custom predominate. It certainly seems as if it might occasionally at least tend to temporary embarrassment.

All the little girls are dressed after the manner of their mammas and older sisters.

The men wear short purple or brown kamiks, or boots, reaching to the knee, their trousers are made of the ordinary sealskin, not as glossy nor as prettily marked as those used by the women; neither are these trousers decorated like those of the women. Their anaraks, or hooded shirts, are made of gayly colored cotton goods, and they tie a bright handkerchief about the neck. A skull cap of dogskin and a short, black pipe complete the costume. The small boys are dressed just like their fathers, with the exception of the short black pipe.

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The Most Beautiful Picture of Arctic Life that a Writer's Pen has Ever Made.